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2001HOCHI01083 - UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED PTQ8441

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DINT-00
	DOTE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	UTED-00
	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	NSAE-00
	OIC-02	OPIC-01	PRS-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-00
	SS-00	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	DSCC-00	PRM-01
	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/008W		

-----21E4D5 200358Z /38

FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5541
INFO AMEMBASSY HANOI
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
USMISSION GENEVA
ASEAN COLLECTIVE
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
JICPAC HONOLULU HI
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HO CHI MINH CITY 001083

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/BCLTV AND EAP/PD/JMARTIN
DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR DRL
DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR INR/EAP/SEA AND INR/IL/B
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CINCPAC FOR FPA
SECDEF FOR ISA/EA/LSTERN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [VM](#) [DPOL](#) [HUMANR](#)
SUBJECT: VISIT WITH DISSIDENT TRAN VAN KHUE

REF: HANOI 02197

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: ON 11 SEPTEMBER, CONGENOFF MADE AN UNANNOUNCED CALL AT THE RESIDENCE OF MR. TRAN VAN KHUE, THE CO-DRAFTER OF A REQUEST TO THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT TO ESTABLISH A "PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION" TO HELP FIGHT CORRUPTION. KHUE AND SEVERAL OTHER PERSONS IN HANOI INVOLVED WITH THIS REQUEST WERE RECENTLY SUBJECT TO QUESTIONING AND HARASSMENT BY THE POLICE (REFTEL). KHUE HAS NOT BEEN ARRESTED, BUT HAS BEEN SUBJECT TO TWICE-DAILY INTERROGATION SESSIONS BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES SINCE HIS EXPULSION FROM HANOI ON 5 SEPTEMBER. KHUE'S PHONE LINE HAS BEEN CUT AND HIS COMPUTER CONFISCATED. HE STATED THAT THE POLICE MAY CHARGE HIM WITH ATTEMPTING TO CREATE AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION. THE CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE WITHOUT INTERFERENCE OR PARTICIPATION BY POLICE, AND ENDED AFTER ONE HOUR WHEN KHUE WAS SUMMONED FOR HIS AFTERNOON QUESTIONING SESSION. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) KHUE TOLD CONGENOFF HE HAD TRAVELED TO HANOI FROM HIS HOME IN HCMC ON 22 JULY TO MEET WITH SEVERAL OTHER ACTIVISTS WHO REPORTEDLY WERE QUESTIONED BY POLICE IN HANOI ON SEPTEMBER 5 IN RELATION TO THE
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REQUEST TO FORM A "PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION." (PRESS ACCOUNTS REPORTED THAT POLICE BROUGHT IN AS MANY AS 15 PERSONS FOR QUESTIONING REGARDING KHUE'S LETTER). KHUE IS THE ONLY SOUTHERNER AMONG THEM, ALTHOUGH HE CLAIMS THAT "MANY PEOPLE" AT THE SOCIAL SCIENCE INSTITUTE IN HCMC WHERE HE FORMERLY WORKED SUPPORT THEIR CAUSE. WHEN ASKED ABOUT HOW HE HAD COME TO KNOW THE INDIVIDUALS IN HANOI, KHUE WAS VAGUE. HE STATED THAT THEY HAD KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR A LONG TIME: "THEY VISIT ME, I VISIT THEM." HE WOULD NOT ELABORATE ON THE NUMBER OF PERSONS HE HAD MET WITH IN HANOI GROUP OR NAME ANY OTHER INDIVIDUALS IN THE SOUTH ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST.

13. (SBU) AS REPORTED IN REFTEL, WHILE IN HANOI, KHUE AND PHAM QUE DUONG WROTE A REQUEST DATED SEPTEMBER 2 TO THE PRIME MINISTER, PARTY SECRETARY, AND PRESIDENT FOR PERMISSION TO ESTABLISH A "PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION" AGAINST CORRUPTION. KHUE ALSO WROTE A FLIER FOR PUBLIC

DISTRIBUTION DESCRIBING THE PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION AND RECRUITING MEMBERS. THE FLIER WAS DISTRIBUTED ON NATIONAL DAY, 2 SEPTEMBER, IN HANOI AND THE NORTHERN PROVINCES, HE SAID, SPECIFICALLY MENTIONING THAI BINH AND HAI DUONG PROVINCES. (NOTE: THAI BINH PROVINCE WAS THE SITE OF SIGNIFICANT DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST LOCAL GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION IN 1997, AND REMAINS A TINDERBOX OF SORTS ON THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE. END NOTE.) IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW MANY OF THE FLIERS WERE DISTRIBUTED OR THE EXTENT OF THEIR DISTRIBUTION. ACCORDING TO KHUE, DUONG ALSO POSTED THE REQUEST LETTER ON THE INTERNET AT WWW.THONGLUAN.COM. (CONGENOFFS HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO UNCLASSIFIED

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ACCESS THIS SITE. APPARENTLY THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY BLOCKED IT WITH A FIREWALL.) KHUE SAID THAT ON 5 SEPTEMBER, THREE POLICE OFFICERS ESCORTED HIM TO THE AIRPORT IN HANOI AND PUT HIM ON A PLANE BACK TO HCMC.

14. (SBU) ACCORDING TO KHUE, WHEN HE ARRIVED BACK IN HCMC, THE LOCAL POLICE SEARCHED HIS HOME AND CONFISCATED HIS COMPUTER AND THE FLIERS HE HAD BROUGHT BACK WITH HIM. EVERY DAY SINCE 6 SEPTEMBER, THE POLICE HAVE COLLECTED HIM AT 8 A.M. AND QUESTIONED HIM UNTIL 11 A.M., AND AGAIN FROM 3-5 P.M. THE QUESTIONS FOCUS ON HIS PERSONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND THE PURPOSE OF THE PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION HE IS ADVOCATING. KHUE HAS NOT HEARD DIRECTLY FROM HIS COMPATRIOTS IN THE NORTH AS HIS PHONE LINE HAS BEEN CUT, AND DOES NOT KNOW THEIR WHEREABOUTS, OR THOSE OF THE UNNAMED INDIVIDUALS WHO DISTRIBUTED THE FLIERS IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCES. KHUE MENTIONED HEARING AN RFI RADIO BROADCAST ON 10 SEPTEMBER WHICH REPORTED ON THE INVESTIGATIONS OF HIS COMPATRIOTS AND INCLUDED AN INTERVIEW WITH ONE OF "THE FOUNDERS" OF THE ASSOCIATION, NGUYEN THANH GIANG. HE ADDED THAT HE HAD RECEIVED LETTERS FROM "PROVINCES, CITIES AND OVERSEAS" IN SUPPORT OF THE ASSOCIATION.

15. (SBU) CONGENOFF ASKED KHUE WHY THE GOVERNMENT WAS SO SUSPICIOUS OF HIM AND HIS PROPOSED ASSOCIATION. KHUE RESPONDED IRONICALLY THAT THE GOVERNMENT WANTS "TO KEEP A MONOPOLY ON FIGHTING CORRUPTION." AND ACCORDING TO KHUE, WHILE THE VIETNAMESE CONSTITUTION STATES THAT ANY INDIVIDUAL MAY CREATE A REGISTERED ASSOCIATION, THE REALITY IS VERY DIFFERENT. KHUE AND DUONG ALSO ADVOCATED FOR AN INDEPENDENT "ANTI-CORRUPTION NEWSPAPER" IN THEIR REQUEST.

16. (SBU) KHUE MAINTAINS THAT HE HAS BEEN WRONGLY ACCUSED AND THAT HIS EXPULSION FROM HANOI AND INVESTIGATION BY THE POLICE "VIOLATE THE CONSTITUTION." HE CLAIMS THAT THE POLICE ARE SEEKING TO CHARGE HIM WITH WHAT AMOUNTS TO TREASON: THE FOUNDING OF AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION. HE STATES FURTHER THAT IF HE AND THE OTHERS ARE BROUGHT TO TRIAL, THEY WILL "SUE THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SECURITY." BUT KHUE ADDED THAT HE BELIEVES THAT IN THE END AUTHORITIES WILL NOT BRING HIM AND THE OTHERS TO TRIAL BECAUSE, HE SAID, "WE WILL MAKE OUR CASE BEFORE THE PEOPLE."

17. (SBU) THE MEETING TOOK PLACE IN THE BACK OF AN UNCLASSIFIED

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ADVERTISING AGENCY RUN BY HIS NEPHEW ON A BUSY COMMERCIAL STREET IN HCMC'S DISTRICT FIVE. DURING THE MEETING HIS SON CAME INTO THE BACK ROOM AND ASKED HIS FATHER IF IT WAS SAFE FOR HIM TO BE TALKING TO US. KHUE ASSURED HIM IT WAS. THE MEETING ENDED AFTER ONE HOUR WITH THE ARRIVAL OF A LOCAL UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER WHO SMILED AND SHOOK KHUE'S HAND. BEHIND THE OFFICER WERE TWO MEN IN PLAINCLOTHES. KHUE INFORMED CONGENOFF THAT HE WOULD NOW BE RETURNING TO THE POLICE STATION FOR QUESTIONING.

BIONOTE

18. (SBU) KHUE WAS PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN TO CONGEN. HE WORKED AT THE SOCIAL SCIENCES INSTITUTE IN HCMC AS A RESEARCHER UNTIL HE RETIRED IN 1996. DURING THE MEETING HE BROUGHT OUT ONE OF THE BOOKS HE HAS AUTHORED, A COLLECTION OF CULTURAL ESSAYS PUBLISHED IN 1996. KHUE STUDIED THE HUMANITIES AT THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY IN HANOI AND GRADUATED IN 1955. PRIOR TO WORKING AT THE SOCIAL SCIENCES INSTITUTE, HE TAUGHT AT THE PEDAGOGICAL COLLEGE IN HCMC. KHUE WAS QUIETLY INTENSE DURING THE MEETING, ANSWERING CONGENOFF'S QUESTIONS BUT NOT MAKING ANY STATEMENTS INDEPENDENT OF THE QUESTIONS.

COMMENT

19. (SBU) COMMENT: KHUE'S IDEAS SEEM TO POST TO BE
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REFORMIST, RATHER THAN RADICAL. IN VIETNAM, HOWEVER,
THE MANNER IN WHICH PERSONS EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS IS
AS IMPORTANT AS THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED. KHUE'S ACTIONS
- HIS REQUEST TO ESTABLISH A "PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION" AND
THE DISTRIBUTION OF FLIERS RECRUITING SUPPORT IN
SENSITIVE PROVINCES ON VIETNAM'S NATIONAL DAY -
APPARENTLY HAVE TESTED THE LIMITS OF OFFICIAL
TOLERANCE.

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